The more Excellent Way:

Or, A PROPOSAL of a

Compleat Work of Charity.

For the Accommodation of some Devout Women, *with such mean, but convenient* Habitation, Work, Wages, *and* Relief, *that they may have Time and Strength for the* Worship of GOD, *both in* Publick *and* Private, *and Freedom of Mind for* Meditation, *and* Religious Exercises, *while their Hands are Imploy'd for* Maintainance *of the* Body; *and that while they enjoy the Benefit of such Accommodations for their own* Souls, *their* Benefactors, *and the* Church *and* Nation *may be benefitted by their* Constant Prayers.

THE greatest part of the Works of Charity amongst us, are but of little more use than for meer Temporal Accommodations. The Reason is, Because there is neither any Limitation in the choice of the Persons, that they be indeed of the Houshold of Faith; that is, of known and approved Vertue, Piety, and Devotion; nor such Provision made, that they be effectually Instructed, Tutored, and, by sufficient Religious Exercises, trained up to be so, as far as Humane Means can avail. This is easie to be observed, not only in our Hospitals, but even in our Schools and Colleges, in our Universities, and in our Cathedrals. Not only in the World, but even in those Places Originally set apart for the Servants of God, it may be feared, the Devil, through the Carelesness and Inconsiderateness of Men, hath gotten too great a part. And this is not only a Shame to our Church and Nation, but a matter of much greater Mischief than is ordinarily observed, or can easily be imagined.

Certain it is, that this Life, which is but short, and to us Mortals incertain, is but a *Preparation* to another of longer Duration. And, therefore, in our Foundations of this Nature, if we have not a Principal respect to that, that the Promotion of that be well provided for and secured, we lose the Principal and most Noble Part of our Charity. The rest, without it, is but a Provision for Brutes or Animals, if not worse —; but this is for Saints and young Angels. Tho

by Ed. Stephens

Tho it was much to be Wished, that we had such Accommodations for * Men as well as for Women, who are well disposed; yet I think it most proper to begin with a **Provision for Women**, for divers Reasons. 1. Because of that Sex we find most Devout People. 2. Their Employments (for the most part) may better admit of Intermission for them to go out to Church twice a day. 3. They do most need it; for whereas Men can ordinarily Earn 2*s.* or 2*s.* 6*d. per* day, most Women cannot Earn above 6*d.* or 4*d.* or not so much.

The Choice of Persons being well made, besides the Advantage of Leisure for the Worship of God, both in Publick, and in their ordinary Religious Exercises together at Home, Care is to be taken that they be Instructed, and often Admonished, *how to go on to Perfection*, (Heb. 6. 1.) *Perfecting holiness in the Fear of God.* (2 Cor. 7. 1.) *That they may stand perfect and compleat in all the Will of God*, (Col. 4. 12.) *And in every good Work:* (Heb. 13. 21.) How to Walk with God all the Day, continually, in all things: And how to Converse with others to their Edification, and to the Improvement of themselves. And being thus fitted and prepared, they may be imploy'd upon Works of Charity to others, in Visiting the Sick and Needy, and carrying Alms and Relief where there may be occasion; and be made Blessed Instruments for spreading the Leven of the Kingdom of Christ.

It may be farther improved to be a **Seminary of Piety and Vertue**, * for such single Persons as want no Accommodations of this World; and a most excellent Accommodation for Retirement and Repose for such as desire it, and want no other. And, therefore, though this be Proposed for such as Need, yet is there no Reason to exclude from Co-habitation with them, **such other Devout Women as need not**, provided they will be Conformable to the Orders of the House, and endeavour to promote so good a Work, by a Holy and Heavenly Example, (which may be of great Use) by their Purse, and by their Pains, for the Assistance of those that Need. However, it is such a piece of Charity as is yet too rare amongst us.

To

* The Author hath also consider'd how *single Men* might live together in a Religious Society, with several *Advantages of Religious Exercises*, good *Convenience for Humane Life* upon reasonable Terms, and yet follow their several *Imployments* without any Hinderance, or loss of Time: But he had rather see a compleat Number of Persons so disposed, to begin and give an Example of such a Society, than offer any more *Proposals* till he seeth the Success of this.

* And for the Education of Young Women in Religious Exercises of Devotion and Vertue.

To be a Miniſter of the Divine Providence, in Proviſion of ſuch Accommodations for ſuch as Need, and would make ſo good uſe of them, is certainly an Excellent Work of Charity. We are Exhorted and Admoniſhed by the Apoſtle, *Gal.* 6. 10. *While we have time, to do good unto all Men, and eſpecially to them of the Houſhold of Faith*; and theſe certainly are ſuch, if any. Theſe are ſome of the choice Members of the Houſhold of Faith; and this is the chiefeſt Good that we can do unto them, ſo ſet them free from the Neceſſities of this Life, to Serve the Lord. This is not to feed the Body, but to feed the Soul. This is indeed to lay up Treaſure in Heaven, and to make us Friends there; to make the Favourites of Heaven upon Earth, and their Angels in Heaven our Friends; and the God of Heaven himſelf, if we do not otherwiſe offend him. *The Adminiſtration of this Service, not only ſupplieth the Want of the Saints, but is abundant alſo by many Thankſgivings unto God.* 2 Cor. 9. 12. *An Odor of a ſweet Smell, a Sacrifice acceptable, well-pleaſing unto God.* Phil. 4. 18. And, certainly, to be conſtantly remembred among other Benefactors at the Altar of God upon Earth, in the fervent Prayers of Devout Chriſtians, is a hopeful way, if there be nothing to interpoſe, to come in Remembrance for Good before the Throne of God in Heaven, by the Mediation of our Great High Prieſt there, who is always mindful of what is done to himſelf in his Saints & Servants here.

Socrates Chriſtianus: *Or, Several Tracts and Papers, Written by the Author of this Propoſal, (who in ſome of them uſed that Name) and Printed by his Order, ſince the* Revolution.

THE *Author* having begun *a Religious Society of Single Women*, according to the Deſign of the ſaid Propoſal, upon Preſumption that there is yet ſo much Piety and Charity left in this City; and eſpecially in this Sex, as not to ſuffer it to fall for want of Supplies; and being willing himſelf to contribute what he can thereunto, hath, among other things, dedicated to that Pious Work what Profit may be made either of ſuch of *his Writings* which have been Printed, and remain in his Hands yet unſold, or of ſuch others as he doth deſign for the Preſs: and therefore, for that Purpoſe, and for the Satisfaction of divers, who have deſired Notes of what he hath Written ſince the *Revolution*, hath here added the *Titles* of them, in Order as they were Written and Publiſhed, as followeth: THE

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It may be farther improved to be a Seminary of Piety and Virtue, * for such single Persons as want no Accommodations of this World; and a most excellent Accommodation for Retirement and Repose for such as desire it, and want no other. And therefore, though this be Proposed for such as Need, yet is there no Reason to exclude from Co-habitation with them, such other Devout Women as need not, provided they will be Conformable to the Orders of the House, and endeavour to promote so good a Work, by a Holy and Heavenly Example, (which may be of great Use) by their Purse, and by their Pains, for the Assistance of those that Need. However, it is such a piece of Charity as is yet too rare amongst us.

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